better loan recovery and convenience in commodity management. An Inter Ministerial Task Force has been constituted on 4.7.2001 to examine the recommendation and to suggest suitable measures for its implementation. The Task Force has yet to submit its report.

Closing down of PCO/STD Booths in J&K

*370. MIRZA ABDUL RASHID: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of PCO and STD booths closed down in Jammu & Kashmir due to acute militancy, recently, district-wise;

(b) how many employees have been rendered jobless and income-less in the State, district-wise;

(c) what steps the Central and State Governments propose to take for rehabilitating such jobless youths in the State where lacs of educated youth have been facing unemployment; and

(d) by when such PCO/STD booths would be revived?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) No PCO booths was ordered to be closed. Only STD and ISD services were withdrawn on security considerations from all STD/ISD/PCOs in all districts in J&K except Leh and Kargil. Even though the STD/ISD facility has been withdrawn, the local call facility and 95 level dialling facility is available to all franchised PCOs and they can dial most of the places within the State. Consequently, while the franchisees may not have been rendered jobless and income less, their earnings would have been reduced.

(d) Restoring STD/ISD in these PCOs can be considered only after the matter is reviewed by the concerned security agencies.